

## **REMARKS**

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested.

Claims 1-4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 16 remain in the application. Claims 5, 7, 10, 11, 14 and 15 have been canceled. Claims 1-4, 6, 8, 12 and 13 have been amended to define the invention more clearly and with greater particularity. The amendments to the independent claims have support in the original specification at least at paragraphs 0029, 0038 and 0044.

The Examiner confirmed receipt of two Japanese references submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed earlier in the prosecution. However, the Examiner noted that the previous submissions did not include English-language translations or statements as to the relevancy of those references. A Fourth Information Disclosure Statement is being filed concurrently with this Amendment and includes statements from Japanese counsel for the applicant explaining the relevancy of the references.

Claims 3, 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. The Examiner identified terms employed in those claims that were not considered to have proper antecedent basis.

Claims 3 and 4 have been amended to address the rejections under 35 USC 112, second paragraph. Claim 5 has been canceled.

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Musher (US 2,278,473). The Examiner identified elements of Musher that were considered to correspond to the elements recited in the original claims. Claims 1-6, 9-13 and 16 also were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Ben-Nasr et al. (US

5,338,575). Once again, the Examiner identified the elements in the reference that were considered to correspond to the original claims.

Independent claims 1 and 2 have been amended significantly to define the invention with greater particularity. In this regard, amended claim 1 relates to a method for processing a liquid-holdable material substance. The method includes impregnating the substance with a liquid that can be vaporized or with a fluid in a super-critical state to an inside of the material substance. The method proceeds by "charging the impregnated liquid-holdable material substance in a processing vessel." The method of claim 1 then continues with "reducing the pressure inside the processing vessel while the liquid-holdable material substance is charged in the processing vessel." As a result, the liquid or fluid penetrates to the inside of the liquid-holdable material substance to expand by vaporization thereby causing the liquid-holdable material substance to expand in a porous manner. Significantly, amended claim 1 now recites "feeding another liquid or gas having a flavoring ingredient or seasoning ingredient into the processing vessel at a pressure that is greater than the reduced pressure and smaller than the atmospheric pressure to impregnate the porous liquid-holdable material substance with the other liquid or the other gas." The method of amended claim 1 concludes by discharging the porous liquid-holdable material substance from the processing vessel and grinding the discharged porous liquid-holdable material substance by a grinder.

The amendments to claim 2 substantially parallel the amendments to claim 1. In this regard, amended claim 2 now positively recites the step of "feeding another liquid or gas having a flavoring ingredient or seasoning ingredient into the processing vessel under a pressure greater than the reduced pressure to impregnate the porous liquid-holdable

material substance with the other liquid or the other gas." Amended claim 2 then concludes with the steps of discharging the porous liquid-holdable material substance from the processing vessel and grinding the discharged porous liquid-holdable material substance by a grinder.

In contrast to the claimed invention, Musher discloses coffee beans that are made porous by a sudden and instantaneous pressure reduction. The chamber employed by Musher is opened suddenly into a low-pressure area, such as the atmosphere so that the coffee beans are ejected from the chamber. Musher has no suggestion of performing flavoring or seasoning in the chamber, which is kept at a pressure greater than the reduced pressure and smaller than the atmospheric pressure.

The Ben-Nasr et al. reference relates to decaffeinating, and discloses pressurizing and depressurizing. However, the Ben-Nasr et al. reference does not suggest performing flavoring or seasoning under a reduced pressure in the same chamber in which the pressurizing and depressurizing is performed.

The invention defined by the amended claims has significant advantages over the applied art. More particularly, the formed porous liquid-holdable material or beans are not moved from one chamber to another after the initial expansion in a porous manner and when performing the step of feeding another liquid or gas having a flavoring ingredient or seasoning ingredient therein. Accordingly, the flavoring or seasoning can be carried out in a shorter time without probability that porous liquid-holdable material decays during movement. Additionally, the flavoring or seasoning is performed under a reduced pressure. As a result, there will be increased impregnation during the flavoring or seasoning step, as compared to the prior art. Still further, the amended claims define grinding the porous

liquid-holdable material substance by a grinder after the flavoring or seasoning. Accordingly, liquid-holdable material or beans are flavored or seasoned deeply before the grinding step. As a result, a uniformly flavored or seasoned powder is obtained.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the claims remaining in the application are directed to patentable subject matter and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicant's attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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